

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY INSIDER

DECEMBER 2021

ISSUE 396

MONTANA



Bitterroot

Montana State Flower

Board of County Commissioners

Donald W. Jones
Chair

John Ostlund
Member

Denis Pitman
Member

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Commissioner Corner



Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to everyone! Writing the December letter is always one of excitement in the holiday spirit, but also one of somberness as it is usually a time we are saying thank you and good luck to those retiring from the County. What ever your life situation we hope you are moving forward with a positive, and hope filled future!

There are many events happening this month, and several gatherings that we do as a county every year. One of them is the lighting of the angel tree, and also the remembrance tree for fallen officers.

As you gather with family and friends to celebrate and remember the blessings in our lives, take a moment to just appreciate the here and now, and the difference those around you are making in your lives. It truly is the gift of the season.

Last month the Rocky Mountain Association of Fairs inducted our own Bill Dutcher into the Hall of Fame, and we will miss his energy around MetraPark as he enjoys time with his family. At MetraPark things continue to build and the excitement about the future of the campus grows with new possibilities. We also continue to book events such as the Festival of Trees from Dec. 2-4 and the Chase Hawk Rodeo Dec. 18th.

Again, on behalf of Commissioners Jones and Ostlund, and myself, have a very Merry Christmas and we are looking forward to a Happy New Year!

Denis Pitman
Board of County Commissioners

**CHASE
HAWKS**
Memorial
Roughstock Rodeo

DECEMBER 18

Yellowstone County Courthouse will be closed on Friday, December 24, 2021 in observance of Christmas Day.



And closed on Friday, December 31, 2021 in observance of New Year's Day 2022.



New Employees

Sarah Bledsaw
Andrew D'Andrea
Mercedes Milan
 Detention Facility
Taylor Hall
Kayla Hageman
 County Attorney
Destiny Stamm
 Sheriff's Office

Recognition of Service**45 Years of Service**

Randy Pardis
 MetraPark
 12/01/1976

30 Years of Service

Mary Matteson
 YCDF
 12/23/1991

This holiday season,
 I may not have everything
 I want, but when I really
 think about it, I have
 everything I really need.

Safety Dividend from State Fund

Congratulations Yellowstone County!

Yellowstone County received a dividend check from Montana State Fund for safety in the workplace. Yellowstone County would like to give back to the employees who have worked so diligently to make the County a safe workplace. Therefore, the Employee Safety Appreciation Award will be given to all regular full-time and



Pictured Left to Right: LynnDee Schmidt-HR, Dwight Vigness-HR, John Ostlund-Commissioner, Alex Lamping-State Fund, Troy Meier-State Fund

regular part-time employees on behalf of Yellowstone County as a token of appreciation for a job well done. Employees will be able to select an item from a wide variety of gifts. This program will roll out in January 2022.

Watch your emails and check out the January newsletter for more information.

Departure of Service for 20 years or more with Yellowstone County

William "Bill" Dutcher
40 years
 MetraPark
 8/12/1981 to 12/31/2021

Mary Matteson
30 years
 Sheriff's Office
 12/23/1991 to 12/31/2021



29th ANNUAL COURTHOUSE CRAFT & BAKE SALE

It's that time of year.
The Craft & Bake Sale will be
held in Room 105 on
December 9th
from 8:30 am to 4 pm
AND

December 10th
from 8:30 am to 12 pm

Cinnamon Rolls - \$1.00 each
First come, first served until gone.
Come do your holiday shopping!



SUNSHINE NEWS

The Sunshine Committee has some Christmas Fun for the Month of December. We are raffling 4 gift baskets · Dec. 8-15th. Watch for a detailed email coming soon! It is also Parking Raffle time and that will be held toward the end of the month.



Secrets of Sugars

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Sugar: It's a word with a bad reputation. But there's more to know about this sweetener, and the news isn't all bad.

The truth is, Americans do eat too much sugar, and the No. 1 source is sweetened beverages, such as soft drinks, coffee beverages and fruit drinks. Baked goods, candy, ice cream and chocolate are also high in sugar.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend no more than 12 teaspoons (48 grams) of **added sugars** per day. Unfortunately, most Americans get closer to 22 teaspoons (88 grams) daily, which is well above the recommendation.

What are added sugars? They are any sweetener that's added to food, including sugar, high fructose corn syrup, honey or syrup. And yes, even sugars with unusual names, such as **evaporated cane juice**, **agave** or **date sugar** are considered added sugars. These products are often marketed as healthy alternatives due to the presence of trace minerals — but you'd need to eat cups of them to get any substantial quantities of minerals (don't try that).

Too much of any added sugar — even one that *sounds* healthy — is problematic since it increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers.

What doesn't count as added sugar? **Natural sugar** occurs naturally in fruit, sweet vegetables, milk and yogurt (e.g., lactose or milk sugar). Since these foods also contain vitamins, minerals, protein (in dairy) and fiber (in fruit), the sugar is not as problematic.

Natural sugars do not count toward the DGA's limit of 12 teaspoons of added sugar per day. That means you can enjoy whole fruit; the DGA recommends two cups a day.



Winter Family Fun

Ready for some fun family pursuits? Don't let the chilly months and less daylight hold you back. Whatever the size of your family — mom, dad, kids, grandparents, siblings — daytime, night time, indoors or outdoors, take time for a midweek break or weekend family adventure, and have fun together.

Start by stepping outside. Exploring the outdoors can invigorate and energize you. Walk through a park, toss a football or try snowshoeing or roller skating, weather permitting. As long as kids bundle up and stay safe, being outside in the cold offers mental and physical benefits for them and for adults.

Indoors, spend warm, cozy evenings playing card games or board games. Read novels or historical sagas out loud to your audience. Try out an online dance routine. Have fun family movie nights or camping nights with sleeping bags. Baking nights can provide a relaxing finish before bedtime.

On bad weather days, gyms and indoor swimming pools are a great outlet for your kids to run around and enjoy, or maybe explore an intramural pickup basketball league. At night, do some stargazing, a unique experience for a family to search and admire the stars together.

Learn more at funathomewithkids.com.

Work Comp Claim FREE - Congratulations!

Congratulations to the following departments for **November**:

Auditor, Clerk & Recorder, Commissioners, County Attorney, Detention Facility, District Court, Emergency & General Services, Elections, Extension, Facilities, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology/GIS, Junk Vehicle, Justice Court, MetraPark, Motor Vehicle, Public Works, Road & Bridge, Treasurer, Weed & Youth Services.

In November there was 1 claim filed: 1-Sheriff Office

Thank you for working safely!





December is Safe Toys & Gifts Month.

Annual Safe Gift Guide

For the new driver:

- **Roadside safety kit** that includes jumper cables, flares, handwarmers and more.
- **Ice scraper**, snow brush and a windshield defogger cloth.

For the runner or walker:

- **Personal alarms** — these come in a variety of forms, including a keychain or wristband.
- **High-visibility vest** or reflector strips.

For the new parent:

- **Baby safety kits** — everything the new parent needs to protect their bundle of joy, including doorknob covers and plug protectors.
- **Safety gates** — there are many models, including expandable gates to fit doorways or stairs.

Check cpsc.gov to make sure no safety recalls have been issued.

For seniors:

- **Wearable remote heart monitors** — these lightweight, wearable sensors will collect and send real-time data to a host company, which can provide it to doctors or caregivers.
- **Medication managers** — some smart watches work in conjunction with pill dispensers and some can even alert caregivers or health care providers that medications aren't being taken. There are also medication alarm clocks and medication dispensers with alarms. For the technically savvy, there are also apps.



Black ice is difficult to see and extremely dangerous.

It's a glaze of ice formed on pavement due to a light freezing rain or refreezing of snow or water. Use extra caution whenever conditions exist for black ice on the road. Drive slower than the posted speed limit and extend your braking distance. If you realize you're driving on black ice, avoid sudden moves; if you're skidding, lift your foot off the accelerator and glide across the ice until you find traction.

BEST bits



■ National Influenza Vaccination Week is December 5 to 11. People

age six months and older need the flu shot. Those with chronic health conditions, including asthma, diabetes or heart disease, have increased risk for developing serious flu complications that can lead to hospitalization. This year, the flu shot — and getting the COVID-19 vaccination if you haven't already — is more important than ever due to the possibility that the flu and COVID-19 will spread this winter.

■ **Know before you go for safer, smoother air travel.** Want to know what you can bring on a plane? Did you forget your ID? Should you sign up for TSA PreCheck to get through security faster? The TSA is available 365 days a year to answer any security-related travel questions. Learn more at tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips.

■ **Drinking and driving: This dangerous combination led to 28% of overall driving fatalities in 2019 in the U.S.** When social plans involve alcohol, designate a non-drinking driver for your group. Don't let friends drive after drinking; take their keys. If you have been drinking, get a ride home from a friend who has not been drinking or call a cab. If you host a party with alcohol, offer alcohol-free beverages and remind guests to designate a sober driver.

■ **Does cold weather make your joints hurt?** You aren't alone. Although arthritis can increase susceptibility to aches when temperatures drop, cold weather can make anyone's bones hurt. To ease the impact of cold weather on your body, dress in layers to stay warm. Do light exercise before you go out; this will lubricate and loosen stiff joints. Maintain a healthy weight to reduce stress on joints and apply heating pads to painful areas when needed.

Festive Egg and Vegetable Casserole

EASY recipe

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 tbsp butter | 5 cups chopped kale or spinach |
| 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil | 12 eggs |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | ½ tsp salt |
| 2 medium red peppers, chopped | 1 cup crumbled goat or feta cheese, divided |
| 6 green onions, sliced | |



Preheat oven to 350°F. **Grease** a casserole dish with butter. In a large pan over medium heat, add olive oil. **Once** hot, add garlic, peppers and green onions, and cook about 8-10 minutes. **Add** kale or spinach and let wilt, about 3 minutes. **Crack** eggs into large bowl. **Scramble** with fork. **Add** salt, ½ cup cheese and cooked vegetables. **Mix** well. **Add** mixture to casserole dish. **Top** with cheese and bake 30 minutes. **Serve** with hot sauce (optional).

Makes 6 servings. Per serving: 281 calories | 19g protein | 18g total fat | 7g saturated fat | 6g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 12g carbohydrate | 4g sugar | 4g fiber | 435mg sodium

“When the world is so complicated, the simple gift of friendship is within all of our hands.”

— Maria Shriver

Holiday Stress? Top 5 Tips for a Healthy Holiday Season



If the holidays sometimes leave you feeling overwhelmed and out of control, you're not alone. And if the Grinch has stolen your spirit and good intentions, try some of these tips to reclaim your ho-ho-ho and stay happy and healthy.

1. Keep up healthy habits.

Make a pact with yourself during the holidays. For example, decide that you'll move more and do something active every day over the next three weeks. Take it a step further, and pledge to start the day with a healthy breakfast, limit the sweets and get at least seven hours of sleep each night. If you don't completely give up your healthy habits, you won't feel like you have to start over once the holidays are over.

2. Beware of seasonal sweets.

The holidays often dish up extra helpings of less-than-healthy treats. Try preparing healthy snacks that are ready to eat when the urge to snack strikes. If you're hosting a holiday party, challenge yourself to make delicious and healthier options.

Instead of beating yourself up about missing a workout, sprinkle some healthy activities into your daily routine. For example, if the weather isn't too frightful and you're working from home, ride your bike around your neighborhood during a lunch break. If dinner is going to be a feast, opt for a light lunch, then take a vigorous walk. And keep the family moving. When the kids are home from school, squeeze in some active chores and trips to the park.

4. But not too active.

Give yourself the gift of peace. If you need some down time to recharge, declare a "me-treat" and do something that relaxes you. Try yoga, meditation or spending time in nature.

5. Make a plan for the new year.

Your poinsettia's pooped and the gifts are all gone. Now what? It's a great time to reset for the new year – but don't go dashing through your to-do list too fast, or you might not stick to your plan. Lay out realistic, sustainable steps for the months ahead. For example, start a daily walking routine and sign up for a [virtual Heart Walk](#) before you set your sights on that marathon.



HOLY ROSARY | ST. JAMES | ST. VINCENT | MEDICAL GROUP

FLEX Benefits Q & A for Health Equity



2022 Flexible Spending Account (FSA), Limited Scope Account (LFSA), Dependent Care (DCAP), and Health Savings Account (HSA) Conversion to Health Equity Q&A

*****The 12/22/21 payroll will be the last payroll deposit
into the Benefit Wallet accounts*****

Flexible Spending Accounts (Medical Flex Spending, Limited Purpose and Dependent Care) Q&A

- Q. What happens to my Flex Spending account (FSA), Limited Scope account (LFSA) and Dependent Care account (DCAP) on January 1, 2022?**
- A. Beginning on January 1, 2022 all funds for FSA, LFSA and DCAP accounts will be transferred to Health Equity automatically, you will not have to initiate a transfer for your flex account. The last day to use the Benefit Wallet debit card will be December 31, 2021.**
- Q. What is the last day that I can submit claims for FSA, LFSA and DCAP to Benefit Wallet?**
- A. It is suggested that you submit your 2021 claims to Benefit Wallet no later than December 17, 2021. This will provide Benefit Wallet with ample time to process your claims. Or you can wait to submit claims to Health Equity during the "runout period" beginning on January 1, 2022.**
- Q. Who will process the 90-day runout?**
- A. Beginning January 1, 2022, Health Equity will process all 2021 claims during the 90-day runout period through March 31, 2022.**
- Q. When must 2021 claims be received by Health Equity during the runout period?**
- A. All Flex Spending, Limited Scope and Dependent Care claims incurred 1/1/21 – 12/31/21 must be received by Health Equity no later than March 31, 2022.**
- Q. How do I submit claims to Health Equity during the runout?**
- A. Watch your emails and then check in the January 2022 newsletter for more information on how to submit claims to Health Equity.**
- Q. What happens if I still have funds left in my Medical Flex or Limited Purpose Flex Account after the runout period ends?**
- A. The \$550 rollover provision allowed on the Flex Spending and Limited Purpose accounts will be done by Health Equity. Any remaining balances of \$550 or less after the runout period will be rolled over into your 2022 account on or about April 1, 2022.**
- Q. I elected to participate in a Flex Spending, Limited Purpose and/or Dependent Care account during the election period. How is my FSA, LFSA and/or DCAP account opened with Health Equity?**
- A. If you enrolled in any of the Flex Spending accounts during the election period in October, your information will be uploaded to Health Equity on December 13, 2021, to create and open your account. You will receive a welcome packet mailed to your home address.**
- Q. Will I receive a new debit card for the Flex Spending account or Limited Purpose account?**
- A. No. There will not be debit cards for the 2022 FSA or LFSA accounts. The last day to use the Benefit Wallet debit card is December 31, 2021.**



HSA Benefits Q & A for Health Equity

2022 Health Equity Health Savings Account Q&A

Q. What will happen to my current Benefit Wallet/Mellon Bank Individual HSA?

A. Yellowstone County will do a "Bulk Transfer" of individual HSA funds to Health Equity. If you elect to participate, there will not be a cost to participate in the HSA Bulk Transfer. You can access the HSA Bulk Transfer form from December 6 through December 22, 2021.

You will need to do the following:

1. Go to the Human Resource Intranet page and click on "HSA Bulk Transfer to Health Equity" and complete the online form; OR
2. You can also click on the link below to access the transfer form.

https://na2.documents.adobe.com/public/esignWidget?wid=CBFCIBAA3AAABLbqZhAB6hYIvw2j6IuAT-icqd4jEriQQyl7GBBNyhY480CJ3H8-8N087GskL2ZMemEt8M*

3. You will be asked to respond to an email to verify your request to transfer your HSA.

Q. What happens if I don't complete the HSA Bulk Transfer form?

A. If you do not complete the HSA Bulk Transfer form by the deadline of December 22, 2021, you will have either a personal account or you will have to transfer your funds at a later date. You will need to complete a paper transfer form to roll over your funds at a future date. There will be a \$25 transfer fee charged to your individual account.

Q. If I participate in the "bulk transfer", when will my funds transfer to Health Equity?

A. Your funds will transfer to Health Equity on February 8, 2022.

There will be a blackout period starting on January 28, 2022, and that is when the Benefit Wallet HSA account will close.

Q. I had investments with Benefit Wallet. What will happen to the investments?

A. The investments will be liquidated. Market fluctuation could impact the account balance that is ultimately transferred to Health Equity.

Q. Does Health Equity allow investing options?

A. Yes, once your account balance reaches \$2,000 you can invest the balance that exceeds \$2,000.

Q. Can I keep the Benefit Wallet HSA account and also have a Health Equity HSA account?

A. Yes. Your Benefit Wallet account will transfer to a personal account and you will be responsible for any monthly maintenance fees.

Q. I elected the High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with the Health Savings account (HSA) during the election period. How is my HSA account opened with Health Equity?

A. If you enrolled in the HSA eligible Health Plan during the election period in October, your information has already been sent to Health Equity on December 3, 2021, to create your HSA account. Health Equity is currently in the process of setting up your account for a January 1, 2022 effective date.

There is a seven-day waiting period from when the enrollment is received to when the account opening process will begin. This allows you to receive the welcome kit to look over the account information. On the seventh day, your HSA account will go through the Patriot Act Screening to verify your identity, and if approved, the account will be pending to open on the effective date, or that day if screening is completed after the effective date. If your account fails the screening, Health Equity will send a letter to your home address requesting additional documentation that you will need to respond to before the account will be opened.

Q. How many debits card will I receive for the Health Equity HSA account?

A. You will receive two HSA debit cards. You can request up to a total of five cards (including the initial two cards sent in your welcome kit) before you will be charged. The total of five cards includes replacement cards if lost or stolen.

Q. How do I designate beneficiaries for the new Health Equity HSA account?

A. Once you receive your new Health Equity HSA card, you can go online to set up your account and designate your beneficiaries.





Yellowstone County

Fact Sheet

Extension Cord Holiday Safety



As the holiday season approaches, festive decorations and colorful lights will soon be displayed on homes across America. Extension cords will be widely used to carry electricity where it is needed, offering a convenient solution for delivering power right where we need it.

However, extension cords are meant to provide a temporary solution and should not be treated as a long-term or permanent extension of your household's electrical system. With continuous and excessive use, these cords can rapidly deteriorate, creating a potentially dangerous electric shock or fire hazard. If used improperly extension cords can cause injury and death. Extension cords are a leading cause of electrical fires. Short circuits; overloading; and damage and/or misuse of extension cords as the leading causes of extension cord fires.

This fact sheet explains how to select the right extension cords for your needs, and provides information about how to avoid common mistakes that can quickly become serious electrical hazards this holiday season.

Five Steps to Selecting an Extension Cord

- Determine your needs.
- Check the total wattage of the electrical devices that will be plugged into the cord.
- Divide that sum by 120 to calculate the total number of amps you will need.
- Check the rating, or the gauge, of the extension cord, which will be displayed as a number followed by the letters "AWG." AWG is the abbreviation for American Wire Gauge, a standard measurement of electrical wiring.

If the total wattage is equal to or greater than the maximum rating of the cord, then you will need a higher rated extension cord.

Safety Tips

- Make sure electrical cords are in good condition. Cracking and fraying are signs that the electrical cord needs to be replaced.
- Do not place extension cords across walkways or other high traffic areas.

- Do not substitute extension cords for permanent wiring.
- Do not run cords through walls, doorways, ceilings or floors. If cord is covered, then heat cannot escape and a fire hazard may result.
- Do not use an extension cord for more than one appliance at a time.
- Multiple plug outlets must be plugged directly into mounted electrical receptacles - they cannot be chained together.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way. Touching even a single exposed strand can give you an electric shock or burn.
- Never force a plug into an outlet if it doesn't fit. This includes using three-prong plugs with outlets that only have two slots for the plug, and cutting off the ground pin to force a fit.
- If the rating on the cord is exceeded, either change to a cord with a higher rating or unplug some appliances.
- Use cords with polarized and/or three-prong plugs. A polarized plug is a plug with one large or wide prong and one narrow one. It ensures that the plug is inserted correctly in a socket and reduces the risk of electrical shock.
- Purchase cords that have been approved by an independent testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).



Facts and Statistics

- On average, an estimated 4,000 injuries associated with electric extension cords are treated each year.
- An estimated 3,300 residential fires originate from extension cords each year.

Don't overload your circuits!

Yellowstone County Human Resources

PO Box 35041

Billings, MT 59107

406-256-2705 - phone

406-254-7908 - fax



Check cords regularly for frays, cracks or kinks, including power tool cords, holiday lights and extension cords.